

Abstract 249

TITLE: Special Needs for HIV+ Elderly People of Color in Newark, New Jersey

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ISSUE: HIV/AIDS among the elderly is of major concern to care givers due to their special needs. The elderly infected population includes those who are long term survivors and individuals being infected for the first time. Most elderly persons especially among communities of color believe that HIV/AIDS is for young people and therefore they are immune to the virus. The virus is actually taking its toll among the elderly population especially people of color who still actively abuse drugs or have unprotected sex with young individuals.

SETTING: The intervention takes place at a community-based organization office in Newark, New Jersey. The infected elderly individuals are the intended audience.

PROJECT: This is a weekly support group that runs for approximately two hours every Saturday. This support group started March 1998. The format of the group includes lectures, discussion, debates and role playing. The audience is rewarded for active participation.

RESULTS: A total of 48 groups have been offered with at least ten participants present at any given group setting. The information gathered is being shared for scientific related activities especially need assessments.

LESSONS LEARNED: The needs of the infected elderly persons are very different from other target populations. There seems to be a lot of mental issues associated with elderly since most of them are grandparents and are ashamed of having the disease. There is absolute need for support groups for the elderly especially for the newly diagnosed. Finally, information gathered can be translated into intervention research to assist compliance issues and treatment management.

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